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AMBLESIDE,

July 9th, 1894.

DEAR SIR OR MADAM,

I have received a circular letter dated London, July 3rd, signed by two members of the Executive Committee of the Parents' National Educational Union. The points discussed in the circular affect both the principles and constitution of the Society.

These are :—

- (a) Whether the Executive Committee has power to alter, verbally or otherwise, the objects of the Society.
- (b) If this point be conceded, whether the alterations in question be admissible.

As to the first point, we append a legal opinion which expresses the common-sense view of the case :—

I have carefully considered the rules and principles of the Parents' National Educational Union and the objects of the Society as set out in Rule 3, and also the advertisement of the Union containing a statement of what are alleged to be its objects, and there appear to be very serious differences. The Educational Union was formed for specific purposes: the President, Vice-presidents, and Council, all joined knowing of those purposes, and all the subscriptions paid to it have been in reliance upon carrying out those purposes, and the Union would be guilty of a very serious breach of the trusts imposed upon it if it were to attempt to vary those objects without considering the members. The purposes are set out in Rule 3, and so long as the Union remains in existence it must exist for those purposes. If fresh objects are sought to be introduced or the old ones varied the present

isp2cmc437

Union should be dissolved, and a new one formed. If this were done by the authority of a preponderating majority of the members of the Branches they might possibly be justified in retaining the old name after having altered the objects, but under no other circumstances. It should be clearly understood that all advertisements and notices relating to the objects of the Society should strictly follow Rule 3, otherwise they are calculated to mislead the public, and to do serious injury to the cause of the Union.

(Signed) GEO. GATEY, Solicitor.

Rule 3.—That the Objects of the Society shall be :

(1) To assist parents of all classes to understand the best principles and methods of Education in all its aspects, and especially in those which concern the formation of habits and character.

(2) To create a better public opinion on the subject of the training of children, and, with this object in view, to collect and make known the best information and experience on the subject.

(3) To afford to parents opportunities for Co-operation and Consultation, so that the wisdom and experience of each may be made profitable to all.

(4) To stimulate their enthusiasm through the sympathy of numbers acting together.

(5) To secure greater unity and continuity of Education by harmonising home and school training.

“Leaflet.”—The Objects are :

The Voluntary Association of parents in an Educational Union as a means of compassing two ends; first, to assist all who are interested in children to understand the principles and methods of the “new” education as set forth by Pestalozzi, Herbert Spencer, and Froebel, and other educational philosophers, (the last words were added at the recent committee meeting,) and to apply them to individual character, aiming at the harmonious development rather than the mere instruction of the child; second, to establish a ground of meeting for the mutual advantage of theory and practice between parents and educationalists, thereby securing unity and continuity in home and school training.

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As to the second point allow me to put before you the following considerations :—

Within our own time the science of Education has been absolutely revolutionised, not by educationalists, but by Physiologists, who have made the brain their speciality. Any real education depends upon the possibility of setting up good records, obliterating evil records, in the physical substance of the brain.

These records, whether physical, moral, mental, or spiritual, we recognise by the *Habit*, which is the outward and visible sign of each.

The importance of training children in good habits has been recognised time out of mind, but the methods of procedure is entirely altered with the recognition of the definite physical processes which register the habit formed.

The doctrine of Heredity, the physiological culture of Habit, the potency of the Idea which initiates the evolution of every habit, these are the factors of education we have to deal with, and this is the new wine which cannot be put into old bottles.

We delight to honour the names of the older educationalists to whom we owe so much in the way of suggestion and inspiration, but it is manifestly impossible that these should have indicated the principles and methods of that science of education which is yet in its infancy, which is, perhaps, the divine revelation given to our own

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day, and which opens most glorious prospects for the elevation of the race.

However suggestive, wise, and inspired it may be, educational thought which does not rest on a physiological basis must be more or less empirical.

The education, the P.N.E.U. exists to further, runs on two lines :—

- (a) The formation of habits, bodily, mental, moral, and spiritual, upon the scientific basis afforded by Physiology.
- (b) The presentation of that Idea which is the all-important initial step in the formation of every Habit.

In these two principles we recognise to the full both the material and spiritual side of man's nature, and find ourselves abreast with the science of the day whether physical or mental.

- (c) As a corollary to these: The development of faculties so much insisted upon by the earlier educationalists takes a quite subordinate place in the latest educational thought as promulgated by the P.N.E.U., the more especially as this Society appeals to a class born with an inheritance of more or less self-developing faculties.

The Parents' National Educational Union does not claim to have originated any part whatever of this living thought. We derive it entirely from such men as Huxley, Carpenter, Maudesley, and the hundred Physiologists, English and German,

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who are devoting themselves to the study of the brain-tissues.

Our effort has been to bring what has hitherto been accessible for the most part to students of Physiology within the range of home practice in the bringing up of children.

Our success in this effort is due to the wonderfully illuminating character of the line of teaching of which P.N.E.U. is, so to speak, the medium.

This teaching, be it remembered, is no mere patch on an old garment; it covers the whole scope of Education in every aspect.

The little manual containing the lectures from which the Society originated is a slight attempt to introduce Parents to this kind of educational thought.

The Magazine which is the organ of the Society carries on this teaching. One of our most proud successes is to have attracted to us a class of contributors who have done great service for Education on these advanced lines, and who form, in fact, a School of educational thought perhaps peculiar to the P.N.E.U.

It cannot therefore be said with justice that "absolute vagueness is to prevail" as regards the best principles and methods of Education as understood by the Union.

It was not possible to express all this in the "Objects," but, seeing that sources of fuller information were provided from the first the

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"Objects," clauses 1 and 2, sufficiently indicate the lines the Union was designed to follow.

At the same time, as advanced thought in this and other matters can be received only by those who are ready for it, the "Objects" were designed to cover all earnest Educational effort, while care was taken to avoid limitations which would hinder the advance of science; especially that most serious of all hindrances, the docketing of the Union with any given name or names.

We hold that Education as a science must ever maintain a tentative attitude. The moment she frames a stereotyped creed represented by any given name or names of the past or present, she becomes formal and mechanical rather than spontaneous and living. The effort to define or limit in matters too broad and deep to be expressed in a definition or represented by a name is the history of all division whether in Religion or Education.

The Chairman of the Committee and three of the four Honorary Organising Secretaries who have had great experience in inaugurating Branches find that this large view of Education appeals strongly to parents who have failed to respond to the efforts hitherto made by other Societies to rally them round great Educational names. We have not found the least difficulty in explaining the "Objects" of a Union which reaches the needs of those actively concerned in the bringing up of children.

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May I earnestly entreat your presence at the Committee meeting summoned for the 18th inst., and that you will support the above views as summed up in the Resolution of the Chairman.

I am, dear Sir or Madam,

CHARLOTTE M. MASON,
Hon. Org. Sec.

LONDON, July 25th, 1894.

DEAR SIR OR MADAM,

We think it probable it will have come to your knowledge that serious differences have arisen among the Members of the Executive Committee of the P.N.E.U. which have resulted in what amounts to a disruption of that Committee. We hope, therefore, that you will permit us to explain the grounds on which we, who have resigned our membership of the Executive Committee and of the Union, have acted in taking this step.

By referring to the Report for 1894, you will see that the "Objects of the Society" were originally expressed to be, *inter alia*, "to assist parents of all classes to understand the best principles and methods of Education in all its aspects." Those of us who have taken part in the work of the Union almost from its foundation never entertained any doubt in our own minds that by the words "the best principles and methods of education in all its aspects" the Union understood those Educational principles and methods which are new, natural, scientific and philosophical as opposed to those which may be regarded as obsolete, unscientific and empirical—those in fact which have been to some extent systematised and formulated by modern philosophical writers who have devoted attention to the subject of education. It was in this sense that we invariably explained the objects of the Union to those to whom we had occasion to recommend it.

Quite recently, however, the Union has endeavoured to appeal to a much wider public, through the establishment of a central office in London, the engagement of a highly competent paid Secretary, and the energetic establishment of Branches in all parts of the Kingdom. This extension of the work of the Union quickly convinced us that it was imperatively necessary that some such definition of the "best principles and methods of education" as we had hitherto been in

the habit of offering by word of mouth, should appear in an authoritative form in the published advertisement of the Union.

With this object in view the Executive Committee issued a leaflet in which the principles and methods recommended by the Union were defined to be such as are "set forth by Pestalozzi, Herbert Spencer, Froebel and other educational philosophers."

To our intense surprise we soon discovered that this definition was strongly disapproved of by several members of the Committee, including the founder, Miss Mason, who had not attended the meeting of the Committee which authorised the leaflet; and it was objected that this leaflet did not merely define the objects of the Union, but *altered* them. To this we strongly demurred, several meetings of the Committee were held, and considerable discussion took place with reference to the matter. This discussion made it clear that a fundamental divergence of views existed among the members of the Committee, dividing it almost equally in point of numbers.

We were convinced of the vital need for some degree of definiteness in the statement of our objects, if we are to avoid the imputation that the vague and general expression, "*best principles and methods*" might be taken to include those which any educational union should above all things endeavour to discourage.

Miss Mason on the contrary desired the old vagueness still to prevail. If on the other hand Miss Mason's contention was well founded and our definition really *altered* the original objects, it was apparent to us that we had for years entirely misunderstood the principles of the Union, and that they were such as we could not support. This view of the matter was emphasised by a circular letter issued by Miss Mason on July 9th, 1894 (a copy of which you may have seen) which appeared to us to be quite inconsistent with the principles hitherto advocated by the Union and the *Parents' Review*.

This brought to light a further difficulty. The *Parents' Review* was regarded as the organ and mouthpiece of the P.N.E.U. But the *Review* was the property of, and was entirely under the editorial and financial control of individuals who acted with Miss Mason; and it was therefore obvious that at any time the *Review* might cease to represent the views of the Committee, or the best interests of the Union. We were strongly of opinion that the Union, through the Committee, should have control of its own organ, and that the financial or other interests of individuals should not be allowed to stand in the way. If the owners of the *Parents' Review*, acting within their rights, were unwilling that it should become in any true sense the mouthpiece of the Union, then, in our judgment, the Union should have made arrangements for the publication of a Magazine that would satisfy this condition, and we could not consent to become parties to the agreement which it was proposed to execute, whereby the Union would undertake the publication of the *Review* without retaining any effective control of its management.

These differences were too serious to be compromised, and we reluctantly came to the conclusion that the two parties could not usefully continue to direct the affairs of the Union on the same Committee, and we have therefore resigned our membership of the Executive Committee and of the Union.

ISABEL A. MARGESSON.

E. Maud McNeill MORTIMER R. MARGESSON.

RONALD J. McNEILL.

MAUD GURNEY FOX.

FANNY FRANKS.

A. F. SHAND.

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WHAT IS THE PARENTS' NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL UNION ?

The Parents' Educational Union has arisen in response to a demand from thoughtful people for wisdom and knowledge in "learning how"—how to know the laws which govern the formation of habit, how to deal with hereditary tendencies, how to give intelligent supervision and guidance, how to develop and nourish the child's threefold nature.

It must be granted that a mass of practical scientific knowledge, moral and physical, has been accumulated during the last twenty years on the subject of Education.* It cannot be too clearly stated that parents are incurring a heavy responsibility, a responsibility that did not rest in the same degree on the former generation, if they neglect to make use of this knowledge. Those parents who deliberately choose to educate their children by the insufficient light of tradition and instinct, refusing to study and profit by the fuller light given to the present generation of parents, do so at their own and their children's peril.

The author of "Ecce Homo" has brought a terrible charge against parents. "Look," he says, "how the English people treat their children. Try and discover from the way they train them, from the education they give them, what they wish them to be. They have ceased, almost consciously ceased, to have any ideal at all. . . . Whatever they wish, they wish so languidly that they entrust the realization of it almost entirely to strangers, being themselves, so they say—and, indeed, the Philistine or irreligious person always is—much engaged. The parent, from sheer embarrassment and want of an ideal, has, in a manner abdicated. . . . The modern schoolmaster should change his name, for he has become a kind of standing or professional parent."

It is not too much to say that the Parents' Union has arisen to remedy this state of things. It strives to show parents that they cannot, by money payments, divest themselves of their responsibilities. It endeavours to supply them with knowledge

*The word "Education" must be taken in its broadest and truest sense and must not be confused with the word "instruction."

and training for their task, to impress on them the absolute necessity for giving careful thought and study to the subject of Education, and to show them that without wisdom and knowledge parental love will be maimed and unable to rise to its true perfection.

A reproach is levelled against the Parents' Union that it claims to have made a discovery, and to call "new" things that were known long ago! This is a misunderstanding. The so-called "New Education" is only a recognition of the fact that as a child's nature is threefold: physical, intellectual, and ethical, so all true education must deal with those three sides of his nature, to the exclusion of none. The "New Education" further recognises that without the understanding, supervision, and guidance of his parents, the child's education will lack harmony and adaptability to its individual requirements. All this was, of course, understood by the gifted few, the wisest and best parents and teachers from Plato downwards. But now it is made known, so that those who run may read, so that none can plead ignorance as an excuse for not learning.

The Parents' Union is a voice uplifted to declare that there is a lofty ideal towards which parents can and must strive if they would make their children effectual men and women. It is a voice that is full of hope and promise for the English people, against whom Professor Seeley has, with undoubted justice, laid the grave charge that, by their wilful incapacity, "professional parents" have become a necessity in England.

Any one desirous of doing so can obtain a Report and full particulars as to the various agencies of the Parents' Educational Union at work in towns and in the country to supply practical help to parents, by applying to the Hon. Sec., the LADY ISABEL MARGESSON, 63, S. George's Road, S.W., enclosing 3½d. in stamps.

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PARENTS' NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL UNION.

PROPERTY IN CHARACTER,

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The prosecution for cruelty commenced this day week at Chester in a case resembling, if the facts reported can be established, that of Mrs. Montague in Ireland, may or may not turn out to be justified. The conflict between the evidence of the witnesses on each side makes it a question of truthfulness; nor does there seem to be any doubt at all that the child whose treatment by its mother was in question, was at least well and carefully fed. The injuries it had sustained might, according to some of the medical evidence, have been accounted for by falls in the attempt to run, and this will be the real issue for the jury when the case comes on for trial. But this, at least, is clear,—that if the statements of the prosecution can be sustained, the motive of the mother was, as it was in Mrs. Montague's case, to break early the child's will, and to make him, so far as possible, an obedient echo of her own will. And this probably is at the root of a great deal of the cruelty which is inflicted under the name of parental "discipline."

Discipline, properly speaking, should, of course, aim at making children obey, and obey cheerfully, in relation to matters on which their parents or teachers really know better what is good for them than they themselves do; in other words, it should aim wholly at the good of the child, and at the healthy development of its own character. But as a matter of fact, parents very often aim at something quite different. They feel towards the child as if it absolutely belonged to them, and as if their credit were concerned in making it evident to the world that it belongs to them, and answers to their word of command as instantaneously as a dog performs its little tricks when the word of command is given. Many parents regard their pride as deeply concerned in extorting from their children an exact correspondence to their signals, not merely when that is for the children's benefit, but whether it be for their children's benefit or not, simply because it is gratifying to their own sense of property in the child to see it echo their minutest wishes. Just as a man takes the greatest pride in making his horse obey the

slightest signal of the rein or whip, a father and mother will often take the utmost pride in making their children obey the most arbitrary orders, only because they give them, and because they look at the commandment, "Children obey your parents," as one given for the glorification of the parents, and not for the advantage of the children.

Even schoolmasters and governesses sometimes fall into the same state of mind, and do not consider themselves good disciplinarians unless they can obtain instant obedience to orders given exclusively to test the subordination of their pupils, and not even devised for their good apart from discipline. Now, up to a certain point, of course, mere discipline is as essential in schools and families as it is essential in the army. It is impossible for parents and teachers to be always explaining why this or that rule is made, and if a child will never obey until it understands why it is asked to obey, it will grow up without any of that pliancy to the control of superiors which is absolutely essential to the organisation even of a household, and much more to that of a school or a State. Discipline implies ready obedience to orders of which the reason is not understood. But it should always *rest on the belief* that these orders will be given for sufficient reasons, and not for the mere satisfaction of those who give them in seeing them implicitly obeyed. The first lesson a superior,—either in a family or a school or an army or a State,—has to learn, is that there is no such thing as property in the character of a human being; that when the individuality of a character has to be suppressed,—and of course the organisation of society requires that it must often be suppressed,—it is suppressed either for its own good or for the good of others to whom consideration is due, and that beyond the limits of these obligations, individuality, far from being a hindrance and annoyance to be got rid of as completely as possible, is a distinct gain to the universe. The wish of some parents to wield as much power over the wills and characters of their children, as they do over the motions of the horses they ride or drive, is not only a foolish but an evil wish. To get excellent instruments on which they can perform as they would perform on a piano, always eliciting exactly the particular vibration that they desire and expect, is clearly not the true object of family life. On the contrary, character, far from being an instrument

to be performed upon by others, should always be a new source of life and originality, which no one should be able to govern despotically from outside, and which, even from inside, is in a great degree a mystery and a marvel to him who has most power over it. The mere notion of making character a kind of repeater, which responds by a given number of strokes to the parent's touch, is a radically absurd one. What a parent ought to wish for is, indeed, instant obedience to orders given for the child's good, and an eager readiness in the child to trust its parents; but beyond this, as much that is distinct and individual, and that has a separate significance of its own, as the child's nature can provide. If there be an utterly mean and poverty-stricken type of parental ambition, it is to have children who shall be remarkable for nothing else than exactly corresponding to their parents' orders,—who shall be echoes of their wishes, products of their suggestion. Mr. Babbage's calculating machine was an offspring almost more interesting than such a child as that.

It is one of the most curious indications of the tendency of the instinct for property to become an overruling passion, that it should prove a temptation, and sometimes a very powerful temptation, to parents to make their children mere creatures for the gratification of their own caprices. The secret of the temptation is, we suppose, a kind of petty ambition. Ambition of a higher kind loves to see its will regnant in the world at large. An ambitious orator delights in the power to thrill a great assembly with his own resolves and convictions. An ambitious statesman loves to see Kingdoms enforcing his wishes, and armies moving whenever he touches a spring; and so, we imagine, it is a sort of domestic ambition which delights to see children turned into mere executive agents for their father or mother's volition, and multiplying, so to speak, the efficiency of that father or mother's influence in the world. But that, surely, is a very perverted sort of parental ambition. If character means anything great at all, it means something much more than a mere sounding-board for the character of others. The highest domestic ambition should aim at eliciting from the children of a family all the more perfect qualities and characteristics which the Creator has implanted in their nature,—and this is an aim which cannot possibly be consistent with that

other aim of turning them into mere obedient subordinates of a parental will. Such an ambition as that is even poorer than the ambition of a man of science who desires to find in the universe nothing new, nothing but a vast increase of the forces with the use and manipulation of which he is already familiar. For in the world of character we are in a field altogether higher than any with which the man of science deals; and what a parent may fairly look for in a child, is something infinitely fresher and more wonderful and fuller of inexplicable beauty, than anything of which the man of science attempts to measure the meaning. The desire to exercise the privileges of ownership over the character of another, is desiring to make it something infinitely less, infinitely poorer, than it was intended to be; because that means putting the very springs of one character in another character external to itself, which does not feel its inmost impulses, and cannot elicit from it, therefore, its highest powers. A character in the keeping of another character is not a character at all; or rather, it is a distorted character, a character twisted and diverted from its true purpose and significance. The passion for ownership is one which has no doubt a very legitimate place in human nature; but there is no passion which is more easily or more often exaggerated into an engrossing and debasing influence. Even in regard to things it is often excessive, and in regard to living creatures it frequently becomes a tyranny of the most hideous kind. But when it is allowed to intrude on the higher region of human character, when a man allows himself to think that he has a sort of ownership in his wife's spiritual nature, or when the parent allows himself to treat the child as if he had a right to make him exactly what he wishes him to be, this passion for ownership results in some of the most shocking of the moral perversions of which human nature admits.

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